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THE GREAT
MISSISSIPPI FLOOD
OF 1874.

ITS EXTENT, DURATION AND EFFECTS.

A CIRCULAR FROM

MAYOR WILTZ, OF NEW ORLEANS,

TO THE

MAYORS OF AMERICAN CITIES AND TOWNS,

AND TO THE PHILANTHROPIC THROUGHOUT THE

REPUBLIC, IN BEHALF OF

SEVENTY THOUSAND SUFFERERS
IN LOUISIANA ALONE.

NEW ORLEANS:

PICAYUNE STEAM BOOK AND JOB PRINT, 66 CAMP STREET.
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Chas. T. M. Spaulding
H-6-54

MAYORALTY OF NEW ORLEANS.

NEW ORLEANS, MAY 30th, 1874.

On the 25th instant, the kind favor of the Western Union Telegraph Company enabled me to send to the Mayors of thirty-four large American cities the following dispatch :

"By request of Relief Committee and leading citizens, I again call on American cities in behalf of fifty-four thousand victims of the great flood, for such aid as your prosperity may permit or your philanthropy prompt you to grant. Contributions in cash and provisions in thirty-five days have been less than one hundred and eighty thousand dollars. In fifteen days our means will be exhausted. The demand for relief will continue great and urgent for many weeks. Daily rations have been distributed to about forty-five thousand—eight thousand furnished by the Government. Painful anxiety as to the results is general.

"Nothing but large increase of resources for relief can prevent the horrors of famine and great loss of life. We need a million of dollars more. Details will be given by mail.

LOUIS A. WILTZ,

Mayor and Treasurer of Relief Fund."

To give the information promised, to extend the appeal to many other cities and to towns and corporate institutions, to enlist the aid of philanthropic journalists and to lay before the members of the national legislature a statement of facts for their guidance, I issue this circular, with the hope that the great and increasing distress and danger in which the inhabitants of the overflowed regions now are may thus be made more widely known and the situation better understood.

The Mississippi River in average high water from Memphis to the Gulf is confined by artificial banks or levees to a channel, varying from half a mile to a mile in width. But for these embankments the unparalleled flood of this year would have formed, for all this distance, a continuous lake, covering the whole alluvial country, from twenty-five miles to one hundred and seventy-five miles in width, and more than six hundred miles long. But in spite of these levees, considerably more than one-half of this area has been submerged. The levees could not withstand the Mississippi in its mighty and ruthless violence, and they gave way in numerous crevasses, varying from one hundred to five thousand feet in width, aggregating fully six miles. Through these great chasms the flood has been pouring since the 15th April, in a stream seven feet in average depth and at the rate of more than seven miles an hour. More water is even now flowing from the great river over the farms and plantations of Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana, than falls over Niagara. This outflow must continue until the river recedes below its natural banks, an indefinite period. In some years high water has lasted a long time. In

I have made careful examination of the workings of your committees of relief, which I am pleased to find composed of citizens of high character and distinguished ability, who labor zealously and constantly in the noble work to which you have called them. Their method of purchasing and forwarding supplies, and their rules and regulations for the distribution of relief met my approval in all respects. By the system adopted the donations of the charitable are sure to do the most good to those who are made destitute by the flood. Wise precaution is taken to avoid the encouragement of idleness by strictly withholding relief from such as find work on lands not overflowed, and who refuse to labor; a precaution which I commend and approve. Careful, systematic economy is employed in all relief measures.

At their request and yours, I have examined your accounts as Treasurer of the relief fund and the accounts and vouchers of the committees, finding all correct and in order. By a well organized system everything received is properly accounted for and promptly applied. I am pleased to say that you and the members of your committees have shown much executive and administrative ability, and that the disposition of contributions has been so careful and so judicious as to merit entire confidence.

You have done and, I am sure, will continue to do all that can be done for the sufferers with the means which the philanthropic put in your hands. I can suggest no improvement in your method.

I cannot close without advising you to renew your appeal for help. Your resources for the required relief are altogether insufficient. Put before the people of America the leading facts relating to this unprecedented and enormous visitation of calamity. A true knowledge of the great danger and suffering of your afflicted people will awaken wealthy and prosperous States, cities, churches and associations to an active sense of their duty. While there is such prosperity and abundance of means everywhere else, these poor victims of the flood must not be left to starve.

Please accept for yourself, and extend to all others whom I have met here, my thanks for the very many courtesies and kind attentions which I have received at your hands and theirs.

Hoping to visit you under more prosperous auspices, I remain

Yours very respectfully,

HENRY G. CROWELL.